

REMARKS

Claims 2-23 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is canceled, claims 15 and 16 are amended to correct antecedent basis, claims 2, 4, 6-8 and 10 are amended to variously depend from previously allowed claim 15, claim 13 is amended to depend from previously allowed claim 14, and new claims 17-23 are added.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed below; (b) do not raise any issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the Final Rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Harris and Examiner Rickman at the interview held March 5, 2008, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication in the Office Action and at the interview that claims 14-16 are allowed. By this Amendment, the subject matter of claim 15 is incorporated into claims 2-12 and new claim 17; the subject matter of claim 14 is incorporated into claim 13 and new claims 18-23; and claim 1 is canceled. Thus, claims 2-13 and 16-23 contain all of the features of either previously allowed claim 14 or previously allowed claim 15. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

II. Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 8-10 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Inagaki et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,696,197) ("Inagaki"). By this Amendment, claim 1 is canceled, rendering its rejection moot. As to the remaining claims, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. However, in order to expedite prosecution, by this Amendment, claims 8-10 variously are amended to depend from claim 15 and, thus, include all of the features of claim 15, and claim 13 is amended to depend from previously allowed claim 14 and, thus, includes all of the features of claim 14. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

III. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

A. Inagaki

The Office Action rejects claims 2-7 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Inagaki. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection; however, in order to expedite prosecution, by the Amendment, claims 2-7 and 12 are amended to variously depend from previously allowed claim 15 and, thus, include all of the features of claim 15. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

B. Inagaki in view of Moritani

The Office Action rejects claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Inagaki in view Moritani et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,929,482). By this Amendment, claim 11 variously depends from claim 15 and, thus, includes all of the features of claim 15. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

IV. New Claims

By this Amendment, new claims 17-23 are presented as discussed in the interview. New claim 17 includes all of the features of previously allowed claim 15, and new claims 18-

23 include all of the features of previously allowed claim 14. No new matter is added. Thus, prompt examination and allowance of claims 17-23 are respectfully requested.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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